

Psalm 23:2
Sermon date: September 21, 2026

Ice breaker

- 1) Think of a place, real or imagined, where you feel completely at rest. No agenda, nothing to prove, nothing to fix. Where is it, and what makes it feel that way?

Unpack It

What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon and why? What was a takeaway or something that left you wondering about?

Historical Context (or just fun facts you may not know)

Sheep will not lie down unless four conditions are met. Shepherding literature notes that sheep won't settle down to rest if they're afraid, if they're being harassed by other sheep or pests, or if they're still hungry. Lying down isn't laziness for a sheep, it's a signal that every need has actually been met and the animal trusts its surroundings enough to be vulnerable. When David writes "he makes me lie down," he's not describing a nap. He's describing a Shepherd who removes every obstacle to real rest.

"Green pastures" in Israel's terrain were not the default, they were the exception. Much of the region David shepherded in is dry, rocky, and seasonal. Good grazing land didn't just appear; a shepherd had to know the terrain, plan ahead, and often lead the flock some distance to find it, sometimes seasonally moving them to where rain had recently fallen. The picture isn't "sheep wandering into an obviously lush field." It's "sheep who could never have found this on their own, led there by someone who already knew where it was."

Diving In

Read together: Psalm 23

Diving Deeper

- 1) Green pastures and peaceful streams weren't lying around waiting to be stumbled on, the Shepherd had to lead the flock to them. What does it tell you about God that the good things in this verse are things he goes and finds, not things we luck into?

- 2) Sheep are naturally afraid of moving water and won't drink from it even when thirsty. Why might God care not just about meeting our needs, but about meeting them in a way we can actually receive?
- 3) "Restores my soul" is bigger than "makes me feel better." How does the difference between an emotional lift and a whole-person restoration change what you expect this verse to promise?
- 4) This week's message named several kinds of fatigue: mental, physical, spiritual, relational, even "technological" (the constant churn of unsettling news and noise). Which of those is most draining you right now?
- 5) Every verb in this verse belongs to the Shepherd, he lets, he leads, he restores. What is the sheep's job in this verse? Is that comforting, unsettling, or both?
- 6) "Weary" and "heavy burdens" can be grief, disappointment, failure, uncertainty, or the exhausting sense that everything depends on you. Which of those is closest to home for you this season?
- 7) The Shepherd leads to green pastures and peaceful streams the sheep could never have found alone and sometimes, like the "Starbucks in Phoenix" moment, what God provides doesn't look like what we expected rest to look like. Where might God be offering you rest right now in a form you almost didn't recognize?

Closing It Out With Prayer

1. Invite each person to silently name (just to themselves) one thing from tonight's discussion they're still carrying alone: a fear, an exhaustion, a burden they've been managing independently of God.
2. Have the group simply say out loud what kind of rest they need this week: physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, without needing to explain or resolve it.
3. Close together by praying Psalm 23:2 back to God as an invitation, not just a description, someone reads it slowly aloud ("He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength"), then lead the group in a simple prayer inviting Jesus to do exactly that this week: to lead, to restore, and to be trusted with what's heavy. Close with a shared "Amen."